

Great ideas

Great ideas are generated in different ways. Sometimes an idea may simply be when a company takes advantage of an opportunity to extend its product range, to offer more choice to existing customers. Or a great idea could allow a company to enter a market which was closed to it before.

Companies which are prepared to spend a lot on R&D may make a breakthrough by having an original idea for a product which others later copy, for example Apple and iPod.

On the other hand, some products are developed in response to customer research. They come from customer ideas. These products are made to meet a need, to satisfy customer demand. Or the product does something similar to another product, but faster, so it saves time. Some people will buy new products because the product raises their status – gives them a new, more upmarket image.

Other people will buy any “green” product which reduces waste or protects the environment, even if it is more expensive. And if an idea is really good and the product fills a gap in the market, it may even win an award for innovation.



Let's now imagine some R&D specialists in a manufacturing company saying:

We were trying to produce a new design when suddenly we had a great idea.

The choice of grammar tenses used here suggests that "trying to produce a new design" was a longer process, and "having a great idea" a short, sudden event. So we can formulate a rule that the longer tense – past continuous ("were trying") is used for such longer actions and the short in its form past simple ("had") – for single, short events.

Ex.1 Following that rule, complete the text below – a success story based on a great idea with the correct form of the verbs: past simple or past continuous.

In many parts of the world, Max Factor has become a famous brand of cosmetics. Yet few people know that Max Factor, who was born in Poland in 1877, is also the name of the inventor of those cosmetics. Apparently, it was while Max **1. worked / was working** as an apprentice to a pharmacist, mixing all kinds of potions, that he **2. developed / was developing** an interest in cosmetics. He **3. lived / was living** in Moscow when he **4. opened / was opening** his own shop, selling a range of handmade cosmetics.

The story goes that one day, some members of the Russian upper class **5. noticed / was noticing** the beautiful make-up worn by some travelling theatre actors who **6. performed / were performing** for them. So they **7. appointed / were appointing** Max Factor the cosmetics expert for the royal family.

In 1904, Factor **8. emigrated / was emigrating** to the USA. He **9. created / was creating** a new kind of make-up for cinema actors in Los Angeles, where he **10. lived / was living**. By the time he **11. introduced / was introducing** his products to the public, all major actresses **12. visited / were visiting** his salon.

Ex.2 In both texts above find these words and expressions:

1. wykorzystać sposobność _____
2. rozszerzyć asortyment produktów _____
3. wejść na rynek _____
4. dokonać przełomu _____
5. zaspokoić potrzebę _____
6. wizerunek z górnej półki _____
7. wypełnić lukę w rynku _____
8. rozwinąć zainteresowanie _____

GLOSSARY (from both the reading text and Ex.1 text)	
to generate	generować
to take advantage of	wykorzyst(yw)ać
opportunity	sposobność
to extend	rozszerzyć
product range	asortyment produktów
to enter a market	wejść na rynek
R&D (research and development)	badania i rozwój
breakthrough	przełom
to copy	kopiować, naśladować
in response to	w odpowiedzi na
customer research	badanie klientów
to meet / to satisfy	zaspokoić
demand	popyt
to raise	podnosić
upmarket	z górnej półki
waste	odpady
to protect	chronić
environment	środowisko
to fill a gap	wypełnić lukę
to win an award	zdobyć nagrodę
innovation	innowacja
inventor	wynalazca
apprentice	praktykant
potion	mikstura
to develop an interest	rozwinąć zainteresowanie
range	zakres, gama
handmade	ręcznie wykonany
to appoint	mianować

ANSWER KEY:

Ex.1

1. was working
2. developed
3. was living
4. opened
5. noticed
6. were performing
7. appointed
8. emigrated
9. created
10. lived
11. introduced
12. were visiting

Ex.2

1. to take advantage of an opportunity
2. to extend product range
3. to enter a market
4. to make a breakthrough
5. to meet a need
6. upmarket image
7. to fill a gap in the market
8. to develop an interest